Road projects in Gujarat

*622. DR. A.K. PATEL: Will the Minister of ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the status of various bridges proposed over major rivers of the State during the Ninth Five Year Plan period;

(b) the details of the allocation made, funds actually released and utilized for each of the projects in Gujarat, during 2001-2002, and indicating the physical targets achieved, project-wise; and

(c) the allocation proposed to be made during the current financial year alongwith the targets fixed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS [MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) B.C. KHANDURI]: (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) 41 major bridges were proposed during Ninth Five Year Plan in the State of Gujarat, out of which 24 bridges have been completed. Work on 16 bridges are in progress and one bridge is yet to be taken up. The detailed status of 41 bridges is given in the Annexure [*See Appendix 195, Annexure No. 45*].

(b) An allocation of Rs. 47.86 crores was made and Rs. 443.77 crores was utilized on 63 works during 2001-02, out which 21 works have been completed. Project-wise details are given the Annexure. [*See Appendix 195, Annexure No. 45*].

(c) An allocation of Rs. 714.50 crores has been made for National Highway works during 2002-03. Out of the 42 works in progress, 34 works are targeted for completion during the year 2002-03. Besides 37 new works are included in the Annual Plan 2002-03 at an estimated cost of Rs. 162.10 crores.

DR. A.K. PATEL: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am happy with the reply given by the hon. Minister, and I congratulate him for expediting the work relating to bridges and national highways in Gujarat. Sir, my

question relates to the two bridges, Tapti and Daman Ganga. Both are very important bridges, and also major rivers. I would like to know what is the position of both the bridges, and when they are going to be completed.

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) B.C. KHANDURI: Mr. Chairman, Sir, as regards the Tapti Bridge, it is on the Vadodra-Surat Section, between 246-247 kilometers. The road aside this bridge has been made into four lanes, but this bridge is a two-lane bridge. In 1999, it was decided that we should make another bridge, side by side, and it was decided to make a three-lane bridge. A joint venture of Gujarat State Government and the National Highway Development Authority was constituted. They started some activities, but, somehow, the work could not get going for various reasons. It has now been decided that this work will be taken over by the NHAI itself, and not as a joint venture. They have started the activity of pre-qualification, and after pre-qualification, the tender action will be taken. As regarding the other bridge, I do not have any information. I will give it to the hon. Member.

DR. A.K. PATEL: Mr. Chairman, Sir, for national highways, during Ninth Five Year Plan, a number of roads were proposed to be constructed by the Government of Gujarat. Out of that, I would like to know the position of the following national highways: Porbander, Rajkot, Morbi, Samekherna, Ratanpur, Deesa, Palanpur and Abu. What is the position of all these national highways? The second proposal was from Himatnagar, Mehsana and Ratanpur. Both are very important roads from the national security point of view. I would like to know what is the position of these?

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) B.C. KHANDURI: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the position regarding conversion of State Highways into National Highways, in brief, is that, at the moment, no more State Highways are being converted till the finalisation of the Tenth Five Year Plan. As regards Gujarat, it has 2,461 kilometers of national highways, and this will give an indication to the Member as to what has been the development. Sir, at the end of the Eighth Five Year Plan, Gujarat had only 822 kilometers of road. During the Ninth Plan alone, we

have now commanded 2,460 kilometers. Therefore, the addition of 830 kilometers, has been done during the Ninth Plan alone, which is a considerable amount. However, as regards the conversion of State Highways into National Highways, Sir, I would say that the problem is very acute. Today, I have in my Ministry demands, for as much as about 40,000 kilometers of State Highways to be convered into National Highways. We have today, 7,58,112 kilometers. Each kilometer that we take over from the State Government, if it is in a good condition, which normally is not, if it is of State Highways standard, then we have to spend Rs. 1 to 1.5 crores per kilometer on this road. Therefore, you can understand the magnitude of the problem. If I have to take over 40,000 kilometers, you can understand the amount of money that I will need to take up this work. Therefore, there is always a complaint that the National Highways are not being maintained. Therefore, a view has been taken that when we are taking over roads, we have to limit the number, and gradually increase the number, and also to see that the State Highways are of State Highways standard. Therefore, I have written to all the Chief Ministers that, in future, when we plan to take over any State Highways, we will ensure that they are of the State Highways standard. I would ask hon. Members from all States to give me the names of such roads, as has just now been mentioned by Dr. A.K. Patel. Because Members keep on writing to me, and this is the type of reply which I give every time. So, I would request all the hon. Members that if they have any roads in mind, like Dr. Patel has mentioned the names of some roads, they may please bring it to my notice. Those roads have to be maintained. Now, we have given Rs. 1000 crores from the Central Road Fund to every State. My advice is kindly use this money to improve the condition of these roads so that they can come up to the standards of National Highways. We do not have any problem about the quality of the road. The second thing which is required to be done is this. You have asked about the state of these things. In this connection, I would like to say that two conditions have been put. One is that the land for improving a

road to that of National Highway standard must be available. We will pay for it, but it should be free from any legal implications. The second thing is that there should be no encroachment on the right of way, when we take over this land. This is the type of suggestion we have made, but this will be considered only after the Tenth Five Year Plan is finalised, and subject to the availability of funds.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Sir, the Government has allocated a huge amount for this purpose, and they are going in a very big way for the construction of roads, converting two-lane roads to four-lane roads, and four-lane roads to six-lane roads. The World Bank is also coming forward to fund the projects. It is very good. But I would like to know whether the Government is aware that to get the work done by the contractors in this country, they have to enter into a joint venture with the foreign companies. Is there any such stipulation? If that stipulation is there, whether the Government could consider removing that stipulation so that the Indian contractors who are more experienced than the foreign contractors can undertake those works and the works can be expedited early.

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) B.C. KHANDURI: Sir, I would like to clarify the misinformation which is there. I would say that Indian contractors are coming forward to enter this big project, the Prime Minister's project. For it, we have sanctioned Rs. 54,000 crores in one lot, and Rs. 4,000 crores in the other lot. Now, Sir, the first question is about the joint venture. In this connection, I would say that it is not at all necessary for Indian people to go into joint ventures. Sir, if the Indian contractors do not have the adequate qualification, in terms of experience of work and financial ability, they go into joint ventures. Two persons start a company, in the form of a joint venture, and then they apply, because, for this project we have a system of pre-qualification, based on the experience of highway construction and also financial ability. Due to this, some people are disqualified. But, as I have just said, there is a sort of misconception. Today, we are having about 145 on-going projects, costing over Rs. 25,000 crores. In this, Sir, we

have only 13 foreign companies. So, you can see that out of 145 projects, only 13 are carried out by foreign companies. Some 30 companies are joint ventures companies, and some 80-90 companies are totally Indian companies. Therefore, I would say that please do not have the impression that Indian firms are not able to compete. This is an open competition. Indian firms are very much competing. Government has given a lot of facilities, in terms of allowing our contractors to import custom-free, high quality, equipment. Sir, on 21 items, the Government has given custom duty exemption. The Indian contractors who want to invest money on projects like BOT are given income-tax exemption for 10 years. Therefore, there are a large number of people who are coming forward, and this problem is not there.

SHRI BACHANI LEKHRAJ: Sir, on the National Highway No. 14, there is a bridge near Deesa, which is too old and too lengthy. It is very strategic, from military point of view, security point of view, and in that section, the work of widening the road into four-lane is in progress. I have myself brought this matter to the attention of the Minister in the Gujarat Government. Since five years, I have been requesting for construction of a bridge. What is the status in regard to construction of that bridge on River Banas on National Highway No. 14? What is the latest position, and whether any allocation of fund has been made in this year for it or not?

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) B.C. KHANDURI: Sir, about the specific place about which the question has been raised, I do not have the information. I will give it to him. But the general policy is that, wherever we are making four lane roads, particularly, under the National Highway Development Project of the Prime Minister, four lane bridges will be made. Sometimes, it takes time, because we have to carry out a detailed survey of the soil investigation and other things, but we have four-lane roads. By and large, we try to have four-lane bridges also. In the Golden Quadrilateral, North-South, East-West corridor, four-lane bridges will be made.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.